

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 NIC-01 SAJ-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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R 151214Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7267

CINCPAC

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 2140

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CH, UR

SUBJ: IL'ICHEV'S RETURN TO PEKING

1. SUMMARY. BOTH SOVIET AND CHINESE SOURCES HERE ARE PLAYING DOWN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IL'ICHEV'S RETURN TO PEKING. WE THINK IT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THEY SAY, BUT THE ATMOSPHERICS FROM MOSCOW DO NOT IMPLY ANY EARLY BREAKTHROUGH. THE TIMING COINCIDES WITH MORE ACTIVE SOVIET DIPLOMACY IN TOKYO, AND PROBABLY IMPLIES GREATER SOVIET ALARM AT SINO-JAPANESE RAPPROCHEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. AT DINNER FEBRUARY 13, IGOR ROGACHEV, DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE MFA'S FIRST FAR EAST DIVISION, MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS TO EMBOFF IN ANSWER TO QUESTIONS ABOUT DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER IL'ICHEV'S RETURN TO PEKING ON FEBRUARY 12. HE WENT BACK, SAID ROGACHEV, TO RESUME THE BORDER TALKS, AND THE FIRST
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SESSION WILL BE ON FEBRUARY 14. THERE IS NO SPECIAL REASON

FOR IL'ICHEV'S RETURN NOW, SAID ROGACHEV, HE IS A TROUBLE-SHOOTER WHO GOES OTHER PLACES, TOO, BUT IT SEEMS THAT HE ALWAYS FAILS. ROGACHEV SAID THAT HE IS NOT SURE HOW LONG IL'ICHEV WILL BE IN PEKING. HE TOOK TWO OTHER NEGOTIATORS WITH HIM ALONG WITH ONE OR TWO TECHNICAL PEOPLE. THE REST OF THE DELEGATION IS IN PEKING ALL THE TIME, SAID ROGACHEV. IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION ON WHY HAN NIEN-LUNG IS LEADING THE CHINESE DELEGATION, ROGACHEV SAID THAT THE SOVIETS WERE INFORMED THAT YU CHAN HAD BEEN VERY ILL. HE REPORTEDLY HAD AN OPERATION IN WHICH TWO-THIRDS OF HIS STOMACH WAS REMOVED. THE SOVIETS, SAID ROGACHEV, DO NOT KNOW IF YU HAD CANCER OR SOMETHING ELSE.

2. JAPANESE EMBOFF (ASAI) SAID THAT PRC EMBOFFS TOLD HIM ON FEBRUARY 13 THAT IL'ICHEV'S RETURN WAS AT SOVIET INITIATIVE, NOT CHINESE. THE CHINESE, HE SAID, WERE NOT OPTIMISTIC THAT IL'ICHEV WOULD BRING ANY SIGNIFICANT NEW PROPOSALS, AND RELATED THE MOVE TO SOVIET EFFORTS TO SLOW DOWN THE SINO-JAPANESE TREATY.

3. COMMENT: IL'ICHEV'S RETURN IS PROBABLY A MORE IMPORTANT EVENT THAN THESE COMMENTS IMPLY, BUT THE ATMOSPHERICS DO NOT LOOK AUSPICIOUS FOR A BREAKTHROUGH. WITHIN THE PAST TEN DAYS MOSCOW HAS RESUMED ITS PROPAGANDA BLASTS AT PEKING INCLUDING THE ALEKSANDROV ARTICLE (MOSCOW 1642), THE NEGATIVE PORTRAYAL OF THE PLA AND ITS NEW COMMAND STRUCTURE IN A SHORT TASS ARTICLE (PRAVDA FEBRUARY 9), AND A NEW TIMES ARTICLE OF FEBRUARY 14 LINKING MAOISM TO TROTSKYISM AND OTHER DEVIATIONS. THIS SOVIET COMMENTARY HAS FOCUSED MAINLY ON IDEOLOGICAL QUESTIONS AND MOSCOW HAS STILL NOT PUBLICLY DENOUNCED THE NEW PRC LEADERSHIP LINE-UP.

4. IL'ICHEV'S LAST TWO TRIPS TO PEKING CONINCIDED WITH SOVIET-U.S. SUMMITS AND SEEMED TO BE TRANSPARENT GESTURES TO IMPLY THAT MOSCOW COULD ALSO PLAY THE SECOND STRING ON ITS ER-H (A TWO-STRINGED CHINESE LUTE). THIS TIME IL'ICHEV'S RETURN COINCIDED WITH TROYANOSKIY'S FEBRUARY 13 CALL ON PRIME MINISTER MIKI WITH A LETTER FROM BREZHNEV (REPORTED IN PRAVDA FEBRUARY 14). THESE MOVES, TAKEN TOGETHER, ARE PROBABLY INTENDED TO SIGNIFY A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN SOVIET ANXIETY ABOUT SINO-JAPANESE RAPPROCHEMENT, ESPECIALLY THE FORTHCOMING TREATY.

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